



Committee on Industry, Research and Energy
The Chair

CONFIDENTIAL

Ref.: D (2024) 32963

Mr Bernd Lange
Chair
Conference of Committee Chairs

Dear Chair,

The Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, in accordance with Rule 129 of the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament, held a public confirmation hearing on 5 November 2024 with Ms Ekaterina Zaharieva, Commissioner-designate, who, subject to the positive outcome of the nomination procedure, will be responsible for Startups, Research and Innovation.

On 16 October 2024, my Committee, pursuant to Rule 129 of the Rules of Procedure and Article 3 of Annex VII thereto, received the letter from the Chair of the Committee on Legal Affairs regarding the scrutiny of the declaration of interests of Ms Zaharieva.

Prior to the confirmation hearing, Parliament had sent the Commissioner-designate a list of written questions. My committee noted that Ms Zaharieva answered those questions in a satisfactory manner.

The course of the confirmation hearing is described in the verbatim transcript of the proceedings.

In evaluating the Commissioner-designate, the coordinators of my Committee noted in particular the commitments made by Ms Zaharieva as regards reaching a 3 percent GDP target in R&I, the independence of the framework programme and an increased budget, simplification of the current programme and easier access to funding, following-up on Parliament's position on the freedom of scientific research, strengthening the independence of the EIC, the support for SMEs, a strong scale-up strategy as well as meeting the Horizon Europe's climate spending target, supporting EURATOM research, promoting gender equality and addressing the root-causes of the brain drain in Europe.

In accordance with Rule 129 of the Rules of Procedure and Article 5 of Annex VII thereto, the coordinators of my Committee, representing a large majority of at least two thirds of committee members belonging to a political group, agreed at their evaluation meeting of 5 November 2024 that Ms Zaharieva is qualified to be a member of the College of Commissioners and to carry out the specific tasks assigned.

The minority view of The Left group as well as the opinion of the Committee on Culture and Education, invited to participate in the confirmation hearing, are annexed to this letter.

I would be grateful if you could bring this assessment to the attention of the Conference of Presidents.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Borys Budka' in a cursive style.

Borys BUDKA

MINORITY VIEW OF THE LEFT GROUP ON THE EVALUATION OF EKATERINA
ZAHARIEVA, COMMISSIONER-DESIGNATE FOR STARTUPS, RESEARCH AND
INNOVATION

(Article 5.4(c) of ANNEX VII to the Rules of Procedure)

As the Left group, we acknowledge that Ms Zaharieva gave good answers to some of our questions (in particular about technical and regulatory issues in the field of additive manufacturing).

However, our members in the ITRE committee decided not to support the Commissioner.

We are not satisfied by the reassurances that she provided on the issue of dual use of research and on the cooperation with Israel.

We believe that she didn't give sufficient reassurances regarding how to address imbalances between countries in the level of scientific and technological development. We see the risk that EU policies will continue increasing such differences, instead of reducing them.

We are worried that there was not enough focus on ensuring that SMEs have effective access to EU funding. This means continuing the status quo where big companies are those who get most of the funding and only pursue their own profit as an objective, rather than pursuing societal goals.

We remark that the commitments on research in the field of climate change and environment were unsatisfactory, and we found worrying the focus on nuclear energy research.

We are also not satisfied about the lack of sufficient commitment to use Horizon funding to the benefit of the social, cultural and creative sector, and to promote mobility of university graduates.

Committee on Culture and Education
The Chair



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Addressee

Borys BUDKA, Chair of the ITRE Committee

The Committee on Culture and Education, invited to the confirmation hearing of Commissioner-designate Ekaterina Zaharieva, which took place on 5 November, considers that the Commissioner-designate is qualified to be member of the College and is qualified to carry out the particular duties she has been assigned in the field of higher education policy, in particular by strengthening the European University Alliances and supporting the next generation of researchers through the matching efforts of the European Education Area, the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area.

This opinion has been adopted by Coordinators representing a large majority of committee members belonging to a political group.

Nela Riehl
Chair of the CULT Committee